

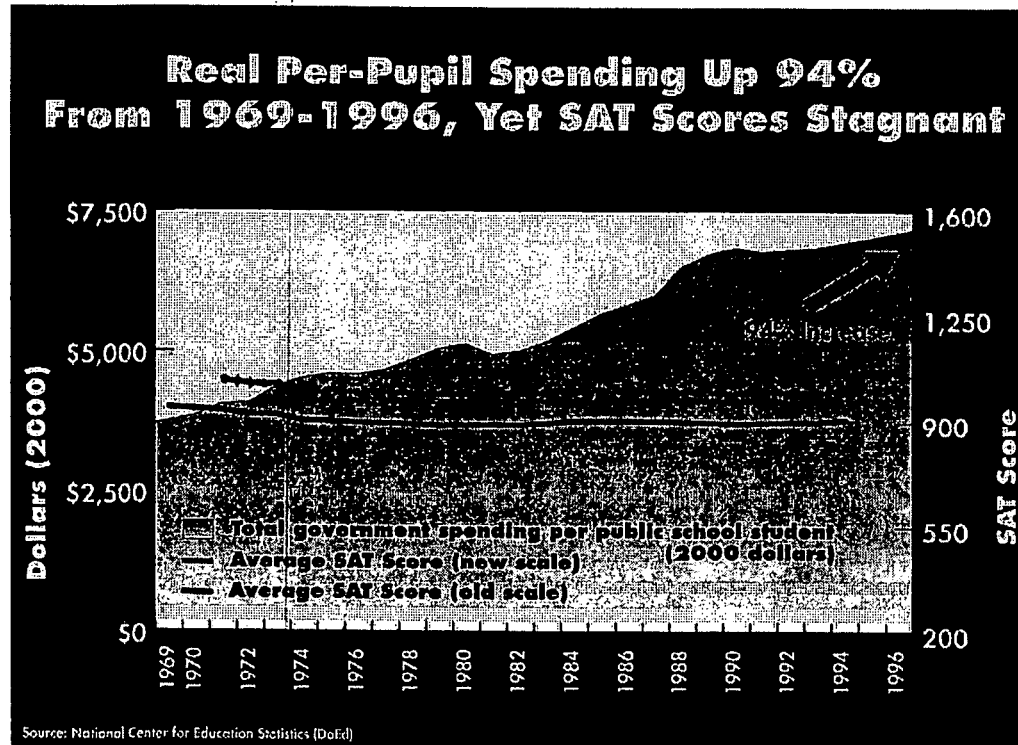
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Republicans Rescue Disadvantaged Students

If You Always Do What You've Always Done, You'll Always Get What You've Already Got

Since 1965, taxpayers have spent \$120 billion to close the education gap between poor students and their peers. From 1969-96, total government spending per public school student increased 94 percent, while federal per-pupil spending is up 415 percent (1964-97). Thanks to Democrats' belief in the power of red tape, that money has failed to increase student achievement:

- **SAT scores.** However measured, Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) have stagnated or dropped since the late 1960s (see chart).



- **Math & Science.** Compared to students in 20 other industrialized nations, American high school seniors ranked 16th in science, 19th in math, and last in physics (1998). Since 1983, 20 million American students have reached 12th grade unable to do basic math.
- **Reading.** The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam shows that 77 percent of fourth graders in high-poverty urban schools are reading below a basic level. Since 1983, 10 million students have reached 12th grade unable to read at a basic level.
- **History.** Since 1983, 25 million students have reached their senior year in high school lacking an understanding of the essentials of U.S. history.
- **Minorities.** In 1996, nearly half (44 percent) of all Hispanic immigrants aged 16-24 had dropped out of school. On average, 17-year-old black and Hispanic children test at the same level as 13-year-old white children in reading, writing, math, and science (NAEP).

Why has Washington's \$120 billion "investment" in education failed? One reason is Democrats' compulsion to suffocate innovation with the false accountability of excessive regulation:

- **Bureaucracy & Red Tape.** Nearly half (45 percent) of Arizona's education agency works full-time to administer the 6 percent of the state's education funding that comes from Washington. Meanwhile, it takes six times as many people to administer a federal education dollar in Florida as it takes to administer a state dollar.
- **Federal directives ignore local needs.** The 50-year-old Holly Grove school in Arkansas' Delta has poor heating, poor lighting, a collapsing ceiling, and broken windows. But thanks to a restrictive federal grant, it also has \$239,000 worth of state-of-the-art athletic equipment (including Stairmasters and Nautilus) to keep students warm.

Thirty years of Washington-knows-best directives have done nothing to close the gap between poor kids and their well-off peers. The Republican Educational Opportunities Act (S. 2) marks the beginning of the end of this failure. While the bill would double federal spending on public education, it also would change the way those funds are used, giving greater flexibility to educators and introducing tough requirements to hold them accountable for student achievement.

- **Straight A's.** Rather than dictate educators' every move, S. 2 would free up to 15 states from federal regulations in exchange for demonstrable gains in student achievement.
- **Teacher Empowerment Act.** The bill would ensure high-quality teaching by giving states and locals the power to decide how best to hire, train, and retain quality teachers.
- **Child-Centered Funding/Title I Portability.** S. 2 would allow 10 states (plus 20 school districts) to tie Title I funding to the child and let parents choose the most effective supplemental services available — making Title I directly accountable to parents.
- **Public School Choice for Kids in Failing Title I Schools.** S. 2 would allow students in a Title I school found to be failing for two years (currently about 4 million children) to transfer to a higher-performing public school in the same district.

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